

A Newsletter
About Prevention,
Preparedness,
and Response

Spill SCENE

WASHINGTON STATE
DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY

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Rescue Tug Helps Save Drifting Ship

(As Spill Scene went to press, the rescue tug had been dispatched three more times to assist vessels since the incident described here.)

The *Barbara Foss*, Washington's dedicated rescue tug, once again proved its worth when it helped save a drifting oil

tanker over the Thanksgiving weekend. The *Atigun Pass*, a decommissioned tanker being towed to China for scrap, lost its towline off the Oregon coast on Monday, Nov. 19. The towing vessel, the Chinese tug *De Da*, was not able to recover the line. The 906-foot tanker carried

about 25,000 gallons of fuel and residual oil.

By Wednesday, Nov. 20, the *Atigun Pass* was 70 miles west of the Columbia River, being pushed north and east by a major Pacific Ocean storm with gale force winds in 25-foot seas. The

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Governor Recognizes Meth Lab Team

Governor Gary Locke recognized the Department of Ecology's spill responders in August for their efficient and effective work in cleaning up clandestine "meth" labs, but even as the ceremony took place in the state capitol building, the number of labs discovered in Washington continued to climb.

As of November 30 this year, 1,770 labs had been reported to Ecology. Compare that to 2000, when 1,454 labs were reported for the entire year and the baseline year of 1990, with only 38 labs reported.

The illegal labs are used to make methamphetamine, a highly addictive drug that can be produced from readily available materials. Meth labs have been found in homes, motel rooms, motor homes, car trunks, and campsites. Producing meth creates toxic and flammable

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Governor Gary Locke awarded the efforts of Ecology's drug lab team to keep productivity up while keeping costs as low as possible.

Receiving the award are, Row 1 (l t r): Andrea Unger, Mark Layman, Joe Hickey, David Byers, Governor Locke, Miriam Duerr, Lori LeVander, Stan Rauh. Row 2: Brian Sato, Jim Pearson, Shellyne Grisham, Sherry Hamilton, Eric Apple, Carl Anderson, Kathy Armstrong, Jim Oberlander. Row 3: Bob Warren, Kim Sherwood, Tom Mackie, Marv Coleman, Nanette Brooks, John Butler, Dick Granberg, Eric Heinitz, Mark Peterschmidt. Back row: Scott Zimmerman, Joe Stohr, Steve Hunter, Doug Stolz, John Hanson, Paul O'Brien, Roger Sesna, Curt Piesch, Jim Sachet, Mike Osweiler. Not Pictured: Mark Ader, Ric Bowman, Lydia Cabeza, Steve Chan, James Chulos, Bill Fees, Jerry French, Dave George, Ted Hamlin, Ron Holcomb, Sheila Hosner, Conor Keeney, Amy Krause, Jon Kuykendall, Jeff Lewis, Brett Manning, Michael McCain, Dave Pavlin, Linda Pilkey-Jarvis, Teresa Reno, Nida Rodriguez, Rick Roeder, Mark Stephens, Mimi Wainwright, Richard Walker, John Williams, Susanne Winter, Bob Wright and Dave Kummerlowe (consultant)

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Jensen Leads Spills Program

Dale Jensen, the new manager of the Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program, has a message for anyone whose interests bring them into contact with the Program.

“Talk with me,” Jensen says. “Let me try to understand you. I want you to be successful in your business, but I also have a responsibility to protect the environment. If there’s a problem, don’t assume things. Pick up the phone and talk to me.”

He said he wants to work together to figure out how to make everyone successful. “But I also feel that people need to be held accountable. And we need to make sure that we’re clear on our expectations.”

Jensen sees his job as a great opportunity for the key element of building relationships.

“The people we have working here are so incredibly talented. It’s such a pleasure to work with people who know their business and have made the effort to work with our stake-

Rescue Tug continued

storm had closed the Columbia River bar, effectively shutting out the closest tug in Astoria, Oregon.

With time running out, Ecology dispatched the *Barbara Foss* from Neah Bay to be ready to help the *De Da* if necessary. By traveling through the night, the rescue tug reached the scene early Thursday morning, Nov. 21, Thanksgiving Day. The *Barbara Foss*’ crew was able to pick up the emergency towline from the tanker and transfer it to the Chinese tug, but the line



Dale Jensen

holders. Those relationships are what makes it happen.”

Jensen noted that it is so important to have a “full-range” program covering spill prevention **and** preparedness **and** response. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the probability of major spills in the Puget Sound area.

Born and raised on a wheat and cattle ranch in Circle, Montana, Jensen received a degree in business administration from the University of Montana. He has run his own ranch and been a small-business owner in Montana, and an environmental

broke before it could be fully deployed.

On Friday, Nov. 22, two more tugs arrived, Crowley Maritime Services’ *Sea Victory*, from Astoria and *Sea Venture*, from Seattle. A salvage team was airlifted onto the tanker to attach a temporary towline to the *Sea Venture*. On Saturday, the *Atigun Pass* was still dangerously close to the Washington coast. The *Barbara Foss* was able to recover the emergency towline once again and transfer it to the

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consultant in California and Oregon. He worked three years at the Department of General Administration before coming to Ecology. In the past nine years at Ecology he has managed the Air Quality Program’s Southwest Regional Office, the Underground Storage Tank/Leaking Underground Storage Tank program in the Toxic Cleanup Program, and two different sections in the Air Quality Program’s headquarters office.

Jensen is married and has three children. He follows his kid’s activities and enjoys the outdoors.

SpillSCENE

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Meth continued

waste, four to five pounds of waste for each pound of drug created. Meth generators dispose of their illegal waste by dumping it by the roadside, down the drain, or on the ground, threatening human health and the environment. Ecology spill responders work with law enforcement officials to safely collect and dispose of the chemicals and contaminated items found at meth labs and dumpsites.

The growth in this polluting activity continues to challenge spill responders and supporting staff to keep

costs down and productivity up. The award for the team noted that the group has:

- ◆ Significantly reduced the reliance on contractors to do the actual meth lab cleanup;

- ◆ Created a way for law enforcement to safely store chemicals from small meth labs for Ecology to pick up and dispose of in bulk; and

- ◆ Creatively found a way to dispose of propane tanks filled illegally with ammonia gas or jury-rigged into acid gas generators (50 per month in 2000).

By training staff to do much of the actual cleanup work themselves, the team has saved an average of \$1,300 per lab or dumpsite. This amounted to almost \$1.9 million in avoided contractor costs in 2000.

Ecology and other agencies around the state are joining forces to work on prevention. Steve Hunter, meth lab policy specialist, and Paul O'Brien, head of the Northwest Region

Response Unit, attended a statewide "meth summit" in September. That meeting examined how coordination and communication among a variety of state, federal and local agencies can deal with the problem. Teams from the 15 counties in the state with the highest meth lab rates met in workshops to problem-solve and share information and ideas.

"The value of the summit was in the detail," said Hunter. "You really heard the true character of the various problems."

"After a lot of sweat and innovation our team has become the best in the nation at safely and efficiently cleaning up meth lab waste." **David Byers**

David Byers, head of Ecology's response staff, noted that the agency's work is expanding into helping local governments build their capacity to handle meth waste, rather than relying solely on Ecology staff. "After a lot of sweat and innovation our team has become the best in the nation at safely and efficiently cleaning up meth lab waste. Now we're looking at ways to work even more efficiently," Byers said. Ecology is working with local governments to provide the needed tools, such as:

- ◆ Hazardous material lockers to help regional law enforcement teams accumulate and store waste before disposal.

- ◆ Training on safe handling, bulking and transporting
- ◆ Supplies – gloves, over-pack buckets, Tyvek suits, etc.

Ecology tailors its help to the needs of the local teams. "As

involved as they want to be, we'll help them get there safely," Byers said.

The surge in the problem had stretched Ecology's response resources painfully thin in the past few years. The Legislature responded to Ecology's requests for expanded assistance by funding 10 new positions dedicated to meth lab response. Eight of those positions have been filled, with two more to be filled after July 1, 2002. Hunter said that this is allowing a more balanced response effort for the

full range of oil and hazardous material spills, as well as meth labs. In addition, Ecology is benefiting from National Guard

members assigned to assist the state through a special drug enforcement effort.

"This is a big help," Hunter said. "We're getting caught up on our paperwork, feeding the federal drug information system. It's hard to prove your need when you don't have the reports done." The additional staff is also allowing time for vacations, training, and maintenance of equipment and vehicles.

The agency is also benefiting from the Washington State Meth Initiative, which provides \$251,000 in federal funds from the Community Oriented Policing Services program in the Department of Justice. Some of this money will go to support equipment and training at the local level.

For more information, call **David Byers** at (360) 407-6974, or e-mail: dbye461@ecy.wa.gov.

Rescue Tug Responds to Drifting Tanker

See story inside

De Da, whose crew successfully attached the “insurance” cable to its towing system. By Nov. 24, the tanker was once again on its way to China.

The state of Washington owes a debt of gratitude to the crews of the three assisting tugs, the salvage team, and the helicopter pilots who placed themselves at significant risk in dangerous seas to prevent a major marine casualty.

For more information, call **Norm Davis** at (206) 389-2438 (e-mail: ndav461@ecy.wa.gov). Also see Ecology’s Web page for the Spills Program, at <http://ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html> for more on the rescue tug and other spill prevention efforts.



Photo by LT William Rimbach, USCG

The Washington rescue tug Barbara Foss (right) works with the Chinese tug De Da (left) to recapture the towline on the Atigun Pass. As of December 20, the Barbara Foss had responded to eight vessel incidents in 2001, six since September.

*Due to space limitations, the **Upcoming Events** calendar is not in this issue. It will return next issue.*

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